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EXCERPTS FROM ADDRESS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY (D., MINN.)
NEW YORK CITY-WIDE FEPC RALLY, HOTEL HENRY HUDSON
JANUARY 31, 1950.

The preservation of human rights is the paramount issue of our generation. The extension and the guarantee of human rights and civil rights is the core of our struggle with the totalitarian forces. Our secret weapon in this great struggle is the fulfillment of the democratic ideal of human equality. This ideal is embodied in political form in the civil rights proposals which are now before the Congress of the United States.

It would seem to the casual observer that the enactment of civil rights legislation would be a routine matter. Our entire history is one filled with the ideals of freedom, individual dignity and brotherhood. The forward movement of our developing democracy has been that of human liberation. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, - all are testimonies to the will of the people of this nation to liberate ourselves from our sense of guilt and shame. The people of our country have carried a great moral burden for too long a time. We have cried out for democracy in other nations at the same time that we denied democracy at home. This hypocrisy has developed a sense of national moral guilt that calls for an immediate answer. Americans now realize that discrimination is a denial of our creed. We have been a nation plagued with a guilty conscience.

We made an auspicious step toward absolving ourselves of this sense of guilt with the publication of the precedent-breaking report of the President's Committee of Civil Rights, Organized labor, business, all religious

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groups - almost all sections of our public life were represented in this report which called - in ringing words - for an end to discrimination, the right of all citizens to live free of terror and oppression and to participate fully in the responsibility and benefits of their government. This was a landmark in our march toward the realization of genuine democracy. The next step, and the step we now face, is the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

In 1948 at the Convention of the Democratic Party, the decision was abruptly made. When the delegates were challenged to get out of the shadow of states' rights and to walk forth in the bright sunshine of human rights, they voted to relieve themselves of their guilty consciences. They voted against discrimination and against bigotry. They justified the freedom of free men.

Again on last November the third our faith in the American citizen was tested and affirmed. There can be no doubt now about the American people's passion for liberation. They voted to liberate themselves from their guilt as well as to liberate minority groups from their displacement. The American voter showed to all the world that he had the courage of his convictions.

In spite of that great demonstration in November, a minority in the Senate of the United States withstands the national tide. They will fail, because history is against them, the people are against them, the President of the United States is against them, the times are against them. Our President risked his political career to bring the issue of civil rights to the people. He traveled many miles to proclaim his vigorous views on this issue.

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He has broken all precedent in the degree of his strength and leadership to the end that man's inviolate dignity shall be accorded to all men equally. President Truman has truly shown that he would rather be right than be President.

As a Democrat I call upon my party to carry out its promises to the people. Those promises were embodied in the platform under four specific proposals;

- (1) the right of equal treatment in the armed forces;
- (2) legislation to abolish the poll tax;
- (3) a meaningful and effective anti-lynching bill; and
- (4) fair employment practices legislation.

I do not underestimate the difficulties that lie before us. Already in the 81st Congress the people of the world have been betrayed by the "sell-out" of human rights known as the Wherry Compromise which changed the rules of the United States Senate on the matter of curbing a filibuster. It was the Republican-Dixiecrat coalition just a year ago which passed the Wherry Resolution that requires a two-thirds vote of the entire membership of the United States Senate to stop a filibuster. This was indeed a Machiavellian body-blow. It was the Republican-Dixiecrat coalition which made a political issue out of human rights. As a member of the Congress, as one who has been given the honour to serve my nation, I am ashamed and am heartsick that this tragic mistake and sell-out has taken place.

Soon we shall come to grips with the issue of fair employment practices legislation. The FEPC bill listed on the Senate calendar as S. 1728 will be brought up for debate on the floor of the Senate within a matter of weeks.

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This bill has the support of the majority of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. This bill represents a reasonable, moderate and constructive approach to a very serious problem. The principles of fair employment practices legislation are neither new nor untried. The President's Committee on FEPC during the war years has an enviable record of accomplishment. Already ten states have FEPC laws on their statute books. Many of the large cities have pioneered in this all important field of legislation. Roughly speaking, about fifty million people, or more than a third of our country's population, is already covered by state or local FEPC laws. It cannot be too strongly emphasized, however, that the problems of discrimination are nation-wide. In discussing them, no state, section nor community should feel that it is being singled out for criticism. To pass FEPC legislation is not to legislate against any section of the country. The problem of discrimination is present in all sections in some form or other. It is therefore the responsibility of the national government through its Congress to establish a basic standard for human rights and problems of employment.

The passage of FEPC and other civil rights legislation is as I have stated before, jeopardized by the Wherry Resolution. I do not want to underestimate the difficulties which are placed in our path. However, I am convinced that belief in the Golden Rule can overcome a Senate rule. If we should fail, there is but one alternative, an old, true, tried and tested alternative, namely, a free election. I am sure that every member of Congress can understand the meaning of this language: The time for political politeness is over. The clubby atmosphere of the Congress does not carry through to the country. It is not enough just to be a good fellow

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and to be liked by your colleagues. The American people did not send 531 members of the Congress of the United States to Washington in order to develop our social life. We are here for the purpose of developing, protecting and extending the democratic way of life. That way of life is being challenged by bigotry, hypocrisy, intolerance and discrimination right here in America. It will require much more courage to stand up against the anti-democratic forces within America than it does to vote the people's money to fight the Communist forces outside of America. The eyes of the people of the United States are focused on Washington. They say: "Whether you are Democrat or Republican is not the issue. By your deeds shall ye be known."



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